

5 **What is claimed is:**

1. A gaming machine comprising:

a user input panel;

a processor connected to the input panel and adapted to be programmed in response to an

10 input operation by a user;

an external visual indicator mounted to the gaming machine and providing illumination of multiple colors; and

the programmed processor providing for the control of the color display of the external visual indicator.

15 2. The gaming machine of claim 1 wherein:

the external visual indicator comprises a cylindrically shaped electronic candle mounted on a top surface of the gaming machine.

3. The gaming machine of claim 1 wherein the external visual indicator includes multiple LEDs connected to the processor.

20 4. The gaming machine of claim 1 wherein the input panel provides a method of programming the illumination and color patterns using existing input switches or devices on the front of the game machine.

5. The gaming machine of claim 1 further comprising a pulse width modulator (PWM) connected to the processor and a current driver connected to the PWM and connected to multiple
25 LEDs.

5 6. The gaming machine of claim 5 having an external visual indicator having at least two stages and each stage having multiple LEDs mounted therein.

 7. The gaming machine of claim 6 wherein the processor provides for the ability to provide a strobing effect of the LEDs.

10 8. The gaming machine of claim 6 wherein the LEDs provide for the colors red, green and blue.

 9. The gaming machine of claim 8 wherein the processor provides for the ability to produce colors other than the primary colors by mixing the colors of the LEDs.

 10. The gaming machine of claim 8 wherein at least one of the LEDs is a multiple color LED.

15 11. The gaming machine of claim 5 further comprising an I/O interface connected to the processor.

 12. The gaming machine of claim 11 further comprising a coding and buffer system connected to the I/O interface.

20 13. The gaming machine of claim 12 further comprising a DC power supply connected to the current driver.

 14. The gaming machine of claim 13 wherein a user may access the user input panel to choose a combination of lights and colors to be displayed so that an electrical signal is sent to the processor which signals the I/O interface which signals the coding and buffer system which signals the PWM in order to control the current driver in order to control the LEDs according to the combination chosen by the user.

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- 5 15. The gaming machine of claim 14 wherein the processor includes all other components and functions in order operate the gaming machine and provides for the main processor.
16. The gaming machine of claim 15 wherein the PWM is connected to the main processor via a secondary stand-alone board.
- 10 17. The gaming machine of claim 15 wherein the processor is a secondary processor which is separate from the main processor that operates the primary functions of the gaming machine.
18. A method of promoting the use of gaming machines via the use of computer programmed external visual indicators, the method comprising the steps of:
- 15 providing a gaming machine having a programmable external visual indicator connected to a processor of the gaming machine;
- coordinating the external visual indicator with a first special event of the gaming machine; programming the processor so that a first customized illumination pattern is provided by the external visual indicator in order to designate the first special event; and
- automatically triggering the first customized illumination pattern of the external visual indicator upon the occurrence of the first special event.
- 20 19. The method of claim 18 wherein the external visual indicator is an electronic candle.
20. The method of claim 18 wherein the first special event is a bonus round.
21. The method of claim 18 wherein the first special event is a jack-pot.
22. The method of claim 18 wherein the first special event is the requirement to service
- 25 the gaming machine.

5 23. The method of claim 18 wherein the first customized illumination pattern includes
a strobing effect.

 24. The method of claim 18 wherein the first customized illumination pattern includes
a combination of lights to provide a yellow illumination.

 25. The method of claim 18 wherein the first customized illumination pattern includes
10 the combination of lights to provide a purple illumination.

 26. The method of claim 18 wherein the first customized illumination pattern includes
a combination of lights to provide a green illumination.

 27. The method of claim 18 wherein the first customized illumination pattern includes
a combination of lights to provide an orange illumination.

15 28. The method of claim 18 wherein the first customized illumination pattern includes
a combination of lights to provide an indigo illumination.

 29. The method of claim 18 wherein the first customized illumination pattern provides
any selected color by combining red, green and blue colored LEDs.

 30. The method of claim 18 wherein the first customized illumination pattern includes
20 a combination of lights to provide a violet illumination.

 31. The method of claim 18 wherein the first customized illumination pattern includes
a combination of lights to provide a first stage of a candle having a first color and a second stage of
the candle having a second color.

 32. The method of claim 18 wherein the first customized illumination pattern includes
25 a combination of lights to provide a first stage of a candle having a first color, a second stage of the
candle having a second color and a third stage of the candle having a third color.

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33. The method of claim 18 wherein the first customized illumination pattern includes a combination of lights to provide a first stage of a candle having a first color, a second stage of the candle having a second color, a third stage of the candle having a third color and a fourth stage of the candle having a fourth color.

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34. The method of claim 18 further comprising the steps of programming the processor so that a second customized illumination pattern is provided.

35. The method of claim 34 further comprising the steps of programming the processor so that a second special event triggers the second customized illumination pattern.

36. The method if claim 18 wherein the programmable external visual indicator comprises multiple LEDs mounted with a cylindrically shaped electronic candle.

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37. The method of claim 18 wherein the programmable external visual indicator comprises a cylindrically shaped electronic candle having at least two stages and each stage having multiple LEDs mounted therein consisting of arrays of a red, green or blue LED.

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38. The method of claim 18 wherein the step of programming the processor further includes the steps of providing a user input panel, choosing a combination of lights and colors to be displayed, sending an electrical signal to the processor, signaling an I/O interface, signaling a coding and buffer system, signaling a pulse width modulator in order to control a current driver in order to control the LEDs according to the combination chosen by the user.

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39. The method of claim 18 wherein the step of automatically triggering the first customized illumination pattern occurs via sending an electrical signal to the processor, signaling an I/O interface, signaling a coding and buffer system, signaling a pulse width modulator in order

5 to control a current driver in order to control the LEDs according to the combination chosen by the user.

40. An improved electronic candle mounted on a gaming machine is provided comprising:

10 a gaming machine having signal processor connected to a pulse width modulator connected to a current driver that is connected to multiple LEDs mounted in the candle;

a user input panel provided by the gaming machine connected to the processor by which a first illumination pattern may be selected and by which the user may indicate a first special event that will trigger the first illumination pattern.

15 41. The gaming machine of claim 40 wherein the user input panel provides for the selection of a second illumination pattern and a second special event.

42. The gaming machine of claim 40 wherein the candle includes three stages having multiple LEDs per stage.

43. The gaming machine of claim 40 wherein the candle is controlled via a network or computer system that controls the candle in a bonusing or a progressive jackpot situations.

20 44. The gaming machine of claim 40 wherein the candle includes a conical parabolic reflector mounted to a printed circuit board having LEDs mounted thereon that reflect light off of said reflector and out of the candle.

25 45. The gaming machine of claim 40 wherein the candle includes multiple translucent rods mounted within the candle corresponding to LEDs mounted therein in order to illuminate the rods.

46. The gaming machine of claim 40 wherein the candle includes translucent disks mounted within the candle adjacent to corresponding LEDs in order to illuminate the disks.